



Modernization in Japan

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION Japan followed the model of Western powers by industrializing and expanding its foreign influence.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Japan's continued development of its own way of life has made it a leading world power.

TERMS & NAMES

- Treaty of Kanagawa
- Meiji era
- Russo-Japanese War
- annexation

SETTING THE STAGE In the early 17th century, Japan had shut itself off from almost all contact with other nations. Under the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns, Japanese society was very tightly ordered. The shogun parceled out land to the daimyo, or lords. The peasants worked for and lived under the protection of their daimyo and his small army of samurai, or warriors. This rigid feudal system managed to keep the country free of civil war. Peace and relative prosperity reigned in Japan for two centuries.

TAKING NOTES

Analyzing Causes List the steps that Japan took toward modernization and the events that contributed to its growth as an imperialistic power.

Modernization
Imperialism

Japan Ends Its Isolation

The Japanese had almost no contact with the industrialized world during this time of isolation. They continued, however, to trade with China and with Dutch merchants from Indonesia. They also had diplomatic contact with Korea. However, trade was growing in importance, both inside and outside Japan.

The Demand for Foreign Trade Beginning in the early 19th century, Westerners tried to convince the Japanese to open their ports to trade. British, French, Russian, and American officials occasionally anchored off the Japanese coast. Like China, however, Japan repeatedly refused to receive them. Then, in 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry took four ships into what is now Tokyo Harbor. These massive black wooden ships powered by steam astounded the Japanese. The ships' cannons also shocked them. The Tokugawa shogun realized he had no choice but to receive Perry and the letter Perry had brought from U.S. president Millard Fillmore.

Fillmore's letter politely asked the shogun to allow free trade between the United States and Japan. Perry delivered it with a threat, however. He would come back with a larger fleet in a year to receive Japan's reply. That reply was the [Treaty of Kanagawa](#) of 1854. Under its terms, Japan opened two ports at which U.S. ships could take on supplies. After the United States had pushed open the door, other Western powers soon followed. By 1860, Japan, like China, had granted foreigners permission to trade at several treaty ports. It had also extended extraterritorial rights to many foreign nations.

Meiji Reform and Modernization The Japanese were angry that the shogun had given in to the foreigners' demands. They turned to Japan's young emperor, Mutsuhito (moot•soo•HEE•toh), who seemed to symbolize the country's sense of

pride and nationalism. In 1867, the Tokugawa shogun stepped down, ending the military dictatorships that had lasted since the 12th century. Mutsuhito took control of the government. He chose the name *Meiji* for his reign, which means “enlightened rule.” Mutsuhito’s reign, which lasted 45 years, is known as the **Meiji era**.

The Meiji emperor realized that the best way to counter Western influence was to modernize. He sent diplomats to Europe and North America to study Western ways. The Japanese then chose what they believed to be the best that Western civilization had to offer and adapted it to their own country. They admired Germany’s strong centralized government, for example. And they used its constitution as a model for their own. The Japanese also admired the discipline of the German army and the skill of the British navy. They attempted to imitate these European powers as they modernized their military. Japan adopted the American system of universal public education and required that all Japanese children attend school. Their teachers often included foreign experts. Students could go abroad to study as well.

The emperor also energetically supported following the Western path of industrialization. By the early 20th century, the Japanese economy had become as modern as any in the world. The country built its first railroad line in 1872. The track connected Tokyo, the nation’s capital, with the port of Yokohama, 20 miles to the south. By 1914, Japan had more than 7,000 miles of railroad. Coal production grew from half a million tons in 1875 to more than 21 million tons in 1913. Meanwhile, large, state-supported companies built thousands of factories. Traditional Japanese industries, such as tea processing and silk production, expanded to give the country unique products to trade. Developing modern industries, such as shipbuilding, made Japan competitive with the West.

Imperial Japan

Japan’s race to modernize paid off. By 1890, the country had several dozen warships and 500,000 well-trained, well-armed soldiers. It had become the strongest military power in Asia.

Japan had gained military, political, and economic strength. It then sought to eliminate the extraterritorial rights of foreigners. The Japanese foreign minister assured foreigners that they could rely on fair treatment in Japan. This was because its constitution and legal codes were similar to those of European nations, he explained. His reasoning was convincing, and in 1894, foreign powers accepted the

China and Japan Confront the West



China

- Remains committed to traditional values
- Loses numerous territorial conflicts
- Grants other nations spheres of influence within China
- Finally accepts necessity for reform

Both

- Have well-established traditional values
- Initially resist change
- Oppose Western imperialism

Japan

- Considers modernization to be necessary
- Borrows and adapts Western ways
- Strengthens its economic and military power
- Becomes an empire builder



▲ The Dowager Empress Cixi (1862–1908)

SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts

1. **Contrasting** According to the diagram, in what ways did China and Japan deal differently with Western influence?
2. **Comparing** What similar responses did each country share despite the different paths they followed?

▲ The Meiji Emperor Mutsuhito (1867–1912)

abolition of extraterritorial rights for their citizens living in Japan. Japan's feeling of strength and equality with the Western nations rose.

As Japan's sense of power grew, the nation also became more imperialistic. As in Europe, national pride played a large part in Japan's imperial plans. The Japanese were determined to show the world that they were a powerful nation. **A**

Japan Attacks China The Japanese first turned their sights to their neighbor, Korea. In 1876, Japan forced Korea to open three ports to Japanese trade. But China also considered Korea to be important both as a trading partner and a military outpost. Recognizing their similar interests in Korea, Japan and China signed a hands-off agreement. In 1885, both countries pledged that they would not send their armies into Korea.

In June 1894, however, China broke that agreement. Rebellions had broken out against Korea's king. He asked China for military help in putting them down. Chinese troops marched into Korea. Japan protested and sent its troops to Korea to fight the Chinese. This Sino-Japanese War lasted just a few months. In that time, Japan drove the Chinese out of Korea, destroyed the Chinese navy, and gained a foothold in Manchuria. In 1895, China and Japan signed a peace treaty. This treaty gave Japan its first colonies, Taiwan and the neighboring Pescadores Islands. (See the map on page 803.)

Russo-Japanese War Japan's victory over China changed the world's balance of power. Russia and Japan emerged as the major powers—and enemies—in East Asia. The two countries soon went to war over Manchuria. In 1903, Japan offered to recognize Russia's rights in Manchuria if the Russians would agree to stay out of Korea. But the Russians refused.

In February 1904, Japan launched a surprise attack on Russian ships anchored off the coast of Manchuria. In the resulting **Russo-Japanese War**, Japan drove

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

A Why did Japan become imperialistic?

Vocabulary

Sino: a prefix meaning "Chinese"

> Analyzing Political Cartoons

Warlike Japan

Cartoonists often use symbols to identify the countries, individuals, or even ideas featured in their cartoons. Russia has long been symbolized as a bear by cartoonists. Here, the cartoonist uses a polar bear.

Prior to the Meiji era, cartoonists usually pictured Japan as a fierce samurai. Later, however, Japan often was symbolized by a caricature of Emperor Mutsuhito. Here, the cartoonist has exaggerated the emperor's physical features to make him look like a bird of prey.

SKILLBUILDER:

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. **Clarifying** How does the cartoonist signify that Japan is warlike?
2. **Making Inferences** In their fight, Russia and Japan appear to be crushing someone. Who do you think this might be?



Russian troops out of Korea and captured most of Russia's Pacific fleet. It also destroyed Russia's Baltic fleet, which had sailed all the way around Africa to participate in the war.

In 1905, Japan and Russia began peace negotiations. U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt helped draft the treaty, which the two nations signed on a ship off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This agreement, the Treaty of Portsmouth, gave Japan the captured territories. It also forced Russia to withdraw from Manchuria and to stay out of Korea.

Japanese Occupation of Korea After defeating Russia, Japan attacked Korea with a vengeance. In 1905, it made Korea a protectorate. Japan sent in "advisers," who grabbed more and more power from the Korean government. The Korean king was unable to rally international support for his regime. In 1907, he gave up control of the country. Within two years the Korean Imperial Army was disbanded. In 1910, Japan officially imposed **annexation** on Korea, or brought that country under Japan's control.

The Japanese were harsh rulers. They shut down Korean newspapers and took over Korean schools. There they replaced the study of Korean language and history with Japanese subjects. They took land away from Korean farmers and gave it to Japanese settlers. They encouraged Japanese businessmen to start industries in Korea, but forbade Koreans from going into business. Resentment of Japan's repressive rule grew, helping to create a strong Korean nationalist movement. **B**

The rest of the world clearly saw the brutal results of Japan's imperialism. Nevertheless, the United States and other European countries largely ignored what was happening in Korea. They were too busy with their own imperialistic aims, as you will learn in Section 3.

Vocabulary

protectorate: a country under the partial control and protection of another nation

MAIN IDEA

Clarifying

B How did Japan treat the Koreans after it annexed the country?

Global Impact

Western Views of the East

The Japanese victory over the Russians in 1905 exploded a strong Western myth. Many Westerners believed that white people were a superior race. The overwhelming success of European colonialism and imperialism in the Americas, Africa, and Asia had reinforced this belief. But the Japanese had shown Europeans that people of other races were their equals in modern warfare.

Unfortunately, Japan's military victory led to a different form of Western racism. Influenced by the ideas of Germany's Emperor Wilhelm II, the West imagined the Japanese uniting with the Chinese and conquering Europe. The resulting racist Western fear of what was called the *yellow peril* influenced world politics for many decades.

SECTION

2

ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Treaty of Kanagawa
- Meiji era
- Russo-Japanese War
- annexation

USING YOUR NOTES

2. Do you think that Japan could have become an imperialistic power if it had not modernized? Why or why not?

Modernization
Imperialism

MAIN IDEAS

3. How was the Treaty of Kanagawa similar to the treaties that China signed with various European powers?
4. What steps did the Meiji emperor take to modernize Japan?
5. How did Japan begin its quest to build an empire?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **ANALYZING CAUSES** What influences do you think were most important in motivating Japan to build its empire?
7. **FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** In your view, was Japan's aggressive imperialism justified? Support your answer with information from the text.
8. **ANALYZING BIAS** How did Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War both explode and create stereotypes?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** In the role of a Japanese official, write a **letter** to the government of a Western power explaining why you think it is necessary for your country to build an empire.

CONNECT TO TODAY CREATING A SYMBOL

Conduct research to discover the name that Akihito, the present emperor of Japan, chose for his reign. Then create a **symbol** that expresses the meaning of this name.